

# Clinical Decision Making

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# Topics to Discuss

- Why Clinical Decision Making Skills?
- Influencing Factors
- Patient Acuity
- Methods for Clinical Decision Making
- Critical Thinking Process
- Impact of the Sympathetic Nervous System
- Putting It All Together

# Scenario 1

- Dispatch to rural residence
  - ◆ 30-year-old Black woman c/o chest pain and SOB
  - ◆ CAD indicates poss drug seeking patient at this address
- Patient in obvious distress
  - ◆ Onset 1/2 hr ago. Sharp pain in chest & back
  - ◆ Has had less severe episodes in past. No known history of cardiac disease. No private MD
  - ◆ Denies recreational drug use
  - ◆ Only med history = “Lupus”

# Scenario 1

- What key pieces of data do we have?
- What additional data would you like?
  - ◆ How will you determine whether this is an acute MI or something else?
  - ◆ How will you decide whether to give pain medication?
  - ◆ If you have a protocol system, which protocol does this patient require?

# Why Clinical Decision Making Skills?

- Decision Making is an expectation of health care providers
- Early Paramedics vs. Present/Future
- The Paramedic's Expected Role
  - ◆ Assess to obtain data
  - ◆ Analyze data to form an initial Dx
  - ◆ Develop a treatment plan appropriate for THIS PATIENT
  - ◆ In some cases, these must be rapid

# Group Exercise: What is Clinical Judgment?

- Discuss these two questions in your groups. Then, you will discuss your findings with the class.
  - ◆ Where does it come from?
  - ◆ What can I (a paramedic student) do to improve my clinical judgment and decision making skills?

# Influencing Factors

- What factors in these categories influence the practice of the paramedic as compared to the in-hospital clinician?
  - ◆ Environment & Setting
  - ◆ Diagnostic Data
  - ◆ Patient Acuity
  - ◆ “Scope of Practice”
  - ◆ Interpersonal Relationships

# Patient Acuity

- Three General Classes
  - ◆ Life Threatening
  - ◆ Potentially Life Threatening
  - ◆ Non-life Threatening
- What do I need to know in order to differentiate between patients with varying acuity?



# Methods of Clinical Decision Making

- Class Exercise
  - ◆ Alternating between Pros and Cons, give one example of each related to the paramedic's use of protocols, standing orders and/or algorithms

# Critical Thinking Process Considerations

- Decision Making Requirements
  - ◆ Fundamental Knowledge
  - ◆ Focus on & Organize a large amount of data
  - ◆ Identify ambiguities
  - ◆ Determine relevancy
  - ◆ Analyze & Compare to similar situations
  - ◆ Explain decisions and construct logical arguments

# Critical Thinking Process Considerations

- Scan the situation
  - ◆ Remain Calm
  - ◆ Gain control
- Focus on the Task
  - ◆ Remove distractions
- ***Systematically*** gather information & Evaluate (Think)
  - ◆ Consider options
  - ◆ Risk vs Benefit
- Decide & Act (Plan)
  - ◆ Act immediately as necessary
  - ◆ Communicate your actions
  - ◆ Listen to others
  - ◆ Think ahead
- Reevaluate
  - ◆ During
  - ◆ After

# Effect of the SNS

- “Fight or Flight”
  - ◆ What happens to the body?
  - ◆ What is the intent of the “fight or flight” response?
  - ◆ How does this affect the paramedic’s ability to make critical decisions in the clinical setting?

# Critical Decision Making Process

- Form a Concept
  - ◆ Gather information
- Interpret the Data
  - ◆ Differential Dx
- Apply Known Principles
  - ◆ Treatment Plan
- Evaluate
  - ◆ Reevaluate constantly
- Reflect

# Critical Thinking Process

- Memory Aid - “The Six Rs”
  - ◆ Read the scene
  - ◆ Read the patient
  - ◆ React appropriately
  - ◆ Reevaluate
  - ◆ Revise the plan
  - ◆ Review performance critically